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LAND REGISTERS OF WESTERN ASIA UNDER THE SELEUCIDS

BY W. L. WESTERMANN

Beginning with the publication in the Tebtunis papyri¹ of fragments of the land surveys made in the Fayum in Egypt, we have obtained a detailed knowledge of the meticulous methods followed by the village scribes in the villages of Egypt in keeping up the land lists in their village districts. Annually they corrected the land lists, with notations of the changes among the tenants. In their reports the land was classified under administrative categories, as royal domain, land under grant, or temple land. The village scribes also reported the land under its "production categories," stating what amount of each holding was entirely flooded (βεβρεγμένη), how much unflooded but subject to irrigation by ditching (ἄβροχος), and how much was dry (χέρσος).² On the basis of the information thus obtained and the local land register thus annually corrected and brought up to date, the land taxes and the rentals from the royal domains were calculated and collected.

The village scribes formulated their reports and sent them upward annually through the regular bureaucratic channels to the royal scribe of the nome. In his office these reports by villages were formulated into a land register for each nome.³ Ulrich Wilcken has assumed that a land register of the whole of Egypt was also kept in the central offices of the Ptolemies at Alexandria.⁴ No positive proof of the existence of this general register has so far been found. But the assumption is no doubt correct; and I venture to add that it would necessarily be greatly curtailed, in the matter of detailed

¹ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt, and J. Gilbert Smyly, *The Tebtunis Papyri* (P. Teb.) (London, 1902), see Appendix I, pp. 538 ff.

² W. L. Westermann, "The 'Uninundated Lands' in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt," in *Classical Philology*, XV (1920), April number.

³ H. Lewald, *Beiträge zur Kenntniss des römisch-ägyptischen Grundbuchrechts* (Leipzig, 1909), p. 82, n. 6.

⁴ Ulrich Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde* (Leipzig, 1912), I 1, p. 178.

information, in comparison with the registers of the nomes, and that the nome registers would necessarily be abstracts of the highly detailed registers by villages kept in the offices of the village scribes.

From Egypt we have so far relatively little information from the bureaux of the nomes as compared with the mass of documents from the village bureaux. From the great central bureau of the diocetes at Alexandria we have nothing. For the land problem in Western Asia in the period of the Macedonian dynasties the situation is quite reversed. No lists are available of the peasants and their little holdings, no village registers. There are extant, however, a few inscriptions dealing with large grants of land made by the Seleucid kings, that is, by the central government, through its general registry office for the kingdom of Syria. These permit a tentative reconstruction, in general outline, of the system of land registers of the royal domain of the Seleucids. This reconstruction is necessarily subject to change as further information comes to light.

In the year 254-253 B.C. Antiochus II sold to his queen Laodice a stretch of the royal domain in the Troad, designated as the village of Pannus.¹ The transaction was carried through as follows: King Antiochus wrote to the satrap of the Hellespontine satrapy, Metrophanes, bidding him determine the boundaries, or more exactly, make the legal "description of property,"² mark off the property with boundary stones, and arrange for the publication of the sale. The satrap in this transaction was the regular avenue of communication between the king and the lower officials. Metrophanes, the satrap, transmitted the order to Nicomachus, the overseer of the royal domains of the Hellespontine satrapy.³ Nicomachus sent the order downward to one — crates the hyparch, who is the man who actually carried on the operations of determining the boundaries and marking with terminal stones the territory sold.⁴

¹ Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones*, 225; B. Haussoullier, *Revue de Philologie*, XXV (1901), 8-21.

² *O.G.I.* 225, l. 30, *περιορίσαι*. That this is the official term for "description of the boundaries of the property" rather than for the actual determination by boundary stones on the spot is shown by the following words: *στηλώσαι τὴν χώραν καὶ προσαναγράψαι τὸν περιορισμὸν εἰς τὰς στήλας*. Cf. Haussoullier, *Rev. de Phil.*, XXV, 32. In *O.G.I.* 221, l. 24; 225, l. 14, and 229, l. 10, the verb *προσориζειν* develops the further meaning of "describing the boundaries and assigning the land to" some city.

³ *O.G.I.* 225, ll. 37-38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 35-36, 49-50.

Of the four documents which formed the original correspondence upon this sale, the two upper ones, the order of Nicomachus and the letter of Metrophanes to Nicomachus, have been lost. There still remain the greater part of the king's letter¹ and the attestation of —crates, the hyparch, that the matter had been attended to.² It is best to begin with the most detailed of the registers, which would necessarily be the local register of the hyparch. The order which came to this official was to fix the limits of a unit of the royal domain called "the village of Pannus and the localities falling within its territory."³ In the original discussion, between Antiochus and his queen, of the transference to Laodice, the tract is so designated, with additional mention of a place called "Baris and the countryside dependent upon it."⁴ The town of Baris, situated upon the right bank of the river Aesopus, evidently developed into a more important place in the later history of the Troad, so that it is mentioned by several of the Byzantine writers.⁵

When the hyparch —crates came to look up the definite description of this village of Pannus upon the local register he found the following delimitation: "Upon the east, starting from the territory of Zelea which looks toward the territory of Cyzicus (the boundary is) the royal road, the old one, leading to the village of Pannus and passing above the village and Baris; from this road⁶ along past the altar of Zeus, which is above Baris, and past where the tomb lies on the right of the road; from the tomb,⁷ the royal road itself (is the boundary) which crosses the Eupaneze, as far as the river Aesopus."⁸ The southern boundary, formed by the river, was apparently not mentioned in the description, as being self-evident. In setting up the boundary stones of the estate the hyparch, or more probably his agents, found that the old royal road, which had once marked the eastern line of this unit of the royal domain, had been plowed under

¹ *O.G.I.* 225, ll. 1-33.

³ *Ibid.*, ll. 2-4.

² *Ibid.*, ll. 34-50.

⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 21.

⁵ Haussoullier, *op. cit.*, 37-38.

⁶ The description now changes from the eastern to the northern boundary, or that leading from the eastern to the western line.

⁷ Again the direction changes, now to the western line.

⁸ *O.G.I.* 225, ll. 40-43, 46-49.

by those living about the place. Three villagers of Pannus were therefore called upon to point out where the road had formerly run. Their names are given in the hyparch's delimitation, evidently to legalize the transaction in case of dispute. No doubt the eastern boundary thus re-established was fixed by boundary stelae, though this is not stated by the hyparch.¹ Presumably there was no plot of the royal domain in this locality, since it would have been referred to in determining the eastern boundary line had such a plot existed in the local land registry office.

An analogous description of boundaries has been preserved in the case of a long-continued boundary dispute between the Cretan towns of Itanus and Hierapytna.² Several descriptions of the boundaries³ of the city-state territory of Itanus, as fixed in previous decisions in this case, were introduced as evidence before the arbitration board of citizens of Magnesia in 139 B.C.⁴ The most complete of these reads as follows: "It was decided by the people of Itanus and Praesia to make peace for all time on the basis of the territory which each now holds, the boundaries of which are these: As the Sedamus flows to Karymae, to the ridge of the hill and beyond to the crest, and straight along following the crest, thence in a straight direction to Dorthannae to the pond, and as the road runs, southward of the road leading through Atron, thence to Mallus in a straight line to the sea."⁵ A map was also introduced in evidence upon which it was "clear at a glance" that the temple of Zeus lay outside the disputed territory.⁶

The Aristodicides document⁷ consists of three letters of Antiochus I Soter (281–261 B.C.) to the satrap of the Hellespontine satrapy, named Meleager, headed by a covering letter of Meleager to the people of Ilium. The king sent an order to the satrap, stating that

¹ *Ibid.*, II. 43–45.

² W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (2d ed., Leipzig, 1900), No. 929.

³ In this case called *περιορισμός*, *ibid.*, I. 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I. 62 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I. 71, *καθότι καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐπιδεικνυμένων ἡμῶν χωρογραφίων εὐσύνοπτον ἦν.*

⁷ *O.G.I.* 221.

he had given, in full ownership,¹ a large estate in the Troad to Aristodicides of Assos. He commands the satrap to arrange that 2,000 plethra of land bordering upon the towns of Gergitha or Scepsis be assigned to Aristodicides and that it be "bounded off and assigned" to the territory of the Ilians or Scepsians.² Again it is apparent that the *προσορισμός*, the detailed description of the boundaries, is available neither at the central land registry of the king nor at the satrapal registry of Meleager. The actual work of delimitation must be referred to the local registry.

Meager though it is, the evidence shows that the local registry offices of the royal domain could produce written descriptions of boundaries (*προσορισμοί*) of the areal units by villages, and the city-state registration bureaus equally detailed descriptions of their territories. The Mnesimachus document found in 1910 at Sardes by Buckler and Robinson and published by them with an excellent commentary,³ shows that the successors of Alexander were giving out large and small portions of the old Persian royal domain in Asia Minor under heritable leases, either to soldiers or in return for other types of distinguished services. The villages and allotments granted to Mnesimachus paid a fixed rental in money into the financial chest of the subdivisions of the satrapy in which each lay.⁴ In the time of the Mnesimachus document, fixed by the editors in the period 306–301 B.C.,⁵ these subdivisions were called chiliarchies.⁶ The grant to Mnesimachus fixes for us a land classification in the Seleucid kingdom which must have corresponded to the gift land (*γῆ ἐν δωρεᾷ*) of the land under grant (*γῆ ἐν ἀφέσει*) in Ptolemaic Egypt.⁷ The payment of rental by Mnesimachus, and later by the temple organization which took over the land from him, proves that the title to the land still rested with the king.

¹ *O.G.I.* 221, l. 20, *δεδώκαμεν* as opposed to *ἐπικεχωρήκαμεν*, "we have granted to." Cf. *δοῦναι*, l. 27, and see Haussoullier, *op. cit.*, 31, n. 2.

² *Ibid.*, ll. 21–25.

³ In the *American Journal of Archaeology*, XVI (1912), 11–82.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

⁶ The editors of the document (p. 69) suggest that these chiliarchies may be the same satrapal subdivisions later known as hyparchies.

⁷ Wilcken, *Papyruskunde*, I 1, p. 284.

The land granted to Mnesimachus, though regarded by him as a single estate¹ and mortgaged in its entirety, consisted of non-contiguous areas. The grant was made under two types of areal units, by villages,² and by much smaller units called "allotments" (κλήροι).³ The view of the editors of the Mnesimachus document that the villages granted to him were "probably not laid off by metes and bounds"⁴ is certainly incorrect. Just as in the case of the village of Pannus sold to Laodice,⁵ the boundaries of each of the village units granted to Mnesimachus must have been sought out in the local registry and the actual local transfer of the land to Mnesimachus made with the greatest exactness as to boundary details. Without such provision the local land registry would have been in a continual state of confusion and a clear title to the property impossible to maintain.

The central land register of the royal domain of the Seleucid kings was constructed necessarily upon broader lines, with an apparent absence of details of the delimitation of the properties. The units on the royal, or central, register were villages⁶ and allotments, κλήροι.⁷ The allotments were presumably of definite areas⁸ at the outset of the Seleucid régime, as was probably the case also under the early Ptolemies in Egypt.⁹ But in Egypt the size of the cleruch grants, even in the late second century B.C., had become quite variable in the same locality and the actual areas of the holdings of

¹ *AJA*, p. 12, col. I, ll. 2, 4, οἶκον.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13, κῶμαι αἶδε (αἱ) καλοῦνται τοβαλμουρα καὶ ἄλλαι κῶμαι ἢ καλεῖται τάνδον καὶ κομβδιλιπια καὶ ἄλλη κώμη Περιασοστρατα καὶ ἄλλη κώμη ἐν Ἀττούδδοις ἢ καλεῖται Ἴλου κώμη.

³ *Ibid.*, ll. 6, 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵ *O.G.I.* 225, ll. 40-49.

⁶ *AJA*, XVI, 12-13. τοβαλμουρα κώμη κῶμαι τανδον καὶ κομβδιλιπια καὶ ἄλλη κώμη Περιασοστρατα; *O.G.I.* p. 225, l. 2, Πάννου κώμη; *O.G.I.* 221, ll. 28-29, τὴν Πέτραν καὶ τῆς χώρας τῆς Πετρίδος ἐργασίμου πλῆθρα χίλια πεντακόσια; *O.G.I.* 262, l. 6, κώμην τὴν Βαιτοκαικηνήν, granted by one of the kings named Antiochus to the temple of Zeus Baetocaeece.

⁷ Mnesimachus document, *AJA*, XCI, 12-13. The κλήροι about Smyrna granted to certain mercenaries colonized in Palaemagnesia are of two types, ordinary allotments and "cavalry" allotments, κλήρους ἵππικους in *O.G.I.* 221, ll. 42-43.

⁸ *AJA*, XVI, 74.

⁹ P. Teb. I, Appendix I, p. 548.

the "hundred arourae" and the "thirty arourae" cleruchs fail in many cases to agree with the titles.¹ So also in Western Asia, variation in the size of the allotments, as private ownership developed, must have come rapidly. In 125-26 A.D. Hadrian wrote to the proconsul of Asia stating that he should take as a standard of measurement for the *kleroi* a mean between the largest and the smallest holdings in that vicinity, if it was impossible to find out the size of the allotments as established by the kings (the Seleucids).²

The indications that the central land registry of the Seleucids was without detailed descriptions of its village and allotment units and unable to keep up to date its information upon transfers from the royal domain are as follows:

1. The king, in all the available cases, must order the satrap to have the delimiting done locally.³

2. In the case of the sale to Laodice the central register is unable to indicate what *τόποι* (perhaps meaning single plots upon which peasants are living outside the village) are on the estate called "the village of Pannus."⁴

3. The village of Petra, conferred upon Aristodicides of Assos, had already been granted to one Athenaeus and the grant had not, as yet, been recorded at the central registry.⁵

The central register did, however, show, in the case of the village of Baetocaece, that it had once been held by an official named Demetrius, but was again available for assignment.⁶ For the royal domains about Babylon the local, or detailed, register would, of

¹ P. Teb. I, Appendix I, p. 547. Cf. P. Teb. I, 27, ll. 7-8; 30, l. 17 (34 arourae); 31, l. 13 (34 $\frac{3}{8}$ arourae); 32, note to line 18 (24 arourae); 54 (10 arourae).

² The ingenious attempt of the editors of the Mnesimachus document (*AJA*, XVI, 73-75) to determine the actual size of the allotments granted to Mnesimachus leads to no acceptable result. The computation is based upon three factors, none of which is applicable with certainty to the situation about Sardes in the time of Mnesimachus. These are a 4 per cent return on land values (this must have been quite variable); an unconvincing comparison between the size of plots of city land about Magnesia with the *kleroi* about Sardes; and an unproved assumption that these city plots of Magnesia were approximately of the same productive quality as the allotments granted to Mnesimachus.

³ *O.G.I.* 225, l. 30; 221, ll. 21-23; 262, l. 8, "according to the existing boundaries."

⁴ *Ibid.*, 225, ll. 3-4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 221, ll. 50-54.

⁶ *O.G.I.* 262, ll. 6-7.

course, be in Babylon itself and immediately available to the officials of the king. This explains why, in a grant made to his wife Laodice by Seleucus II¹ in 233–232 B.C.,² the size of the grants (15, 12, 30 measures) is recorded.³

There was a land register maintained for the Lydian satrapy at Sardes, at a bureau called the βασιλικαὶ γραφαί.⁴ This may have been the name of the land-registry office or of a general record office of the satrapy, of which the land registry was merely one department. In the sale to Laodice the satrap Metrophanes receives an order from the king to record the sale in this Sardinian bureau. It is a justified assumption that similar land registers for the satrapies were established in the other provinces of the Seleucid kingdom.

There is no evidence regarding the extent of the details kept upon the satrapal registers. I have shown, however, that the actual descriptions of the boundaries were obtained through the hyparch, an official of the subdivision of the satrapy.⁵ One has, therefore, a strong impression that the satrapal registry office was not supplied with details as to the land units of villages and allotments.

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¹ Haussoullier, *op. cit.*, 18. The cuneiform tablet recording this gift is in New York.

² Rostovtseff in *Klio* I, 299, n. 1.

³ *Rev. de Phil.*, XXV, 18.

⁴ *O.G.I.* 225, ll. 23–24, καὶ τὴν ὥνῃν ἀναγράψαι εἰς τὰς βασιλικὰς γραφὰς τὰς ἐν Σάρδεσιν.

⁵ *O.G.I.* 238, n. 2. See the fuller discussion by Haussoullier, *op. cit.*, 22–26.